

## § 731.102

*Applicant* means a person who is being considered or has been considered for employment.

*Appointee* means a person who has entered on duty and is in the first year of a subject-to-investigation appointment (as defined in § 731.104).

*Core Duty* means a continuing responsibility that is of particular importance to the relevant covered position or the achievement of an agency's mission.

*Covered position* means a position in the competitive service, a position in the excepted service where the incumbent can be noncompetitively converted to the competitive service, and a career appointment to a position in the Senior Executive Service.

*Days* means calendar days unless otherwise specified in this part.

*Employee* means a person who has completed the first year of a subject-to-investigation appointment.

*Material* means, in reference to a statement, one that is capable of influencing, affects, or has a natural tendency to affect, an official decision even if OPM or an agency does not rely upon it.

*Suitability action* means an outcome described in § 731.203 and may be taken only by OPM or an agency with delegated authority under the procedures in subparts C and D of this part.

*Suitability determination* means a decision by OPM or an agency with delegated authority that a person is suitable or is not suitable for employment in covered positions in the Federal Government or a specific Federal agency.

[73 FR 20154, Apr. 15, 2008, as amended at 73 FR 66492, Nov. 10, 2008]

## § 731.102 Implementation.

(a) An investigation conducted for the purpose of determining suitability under this part may not be used for any other purpose except as provided in a Privacy Act system of records notice published by the agency conducting the investigation.

(b) Under OMB Circular No. A-130 Revised, issued November 20, 2000, agencies are to implement and maintain a program to ensure that adequate protection is provided for all automated information systems. Agency personnel

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screening programs may be based on procedures developed by OPM. The Computer Security Act of 1987 (Pub. L. 100-235) provides additional requirements for Federal automated information systems.

(c) OPM may set forth policies, procedures, criteria, standards, quality control procedures, and supplementary guidance for the implementation of this part in OPM issuances.

## § 731.103 Delegation to agencies.

(a) Subject to the limitations and requirements of paragraphs (f) and (g) of this section, OPM delegates to the heads of agencies authority for making suitability determinations and taking suitability actions (including limited, agency-specific debarments under § 731.205) in cases involving *applicants* for and *appointees* to covered positions in the agency.

(b) When an agency, acting under delegated authority from OPM, determines that a Governmentwide debarment by OPM under § 731.204(a) may be an appropriate action, it must refer the case to OPM for debarment consideration. Agencies must make these referrals prior to any proposed suitability action, but only after sufficient resolution of the suitability issue(s), through subject contact or investigation, to determine if a Governmentwide debarment appears warranted.

(c) Agencies exercising authority under this part by delegation from OPM must adhere to OPM requirements as stated in this part and OPM's issuances described in § 731.102(c). Agencies must also implement policies and maintain records demonstrating that they employ reasonable methods to ensure adherence to these OPM issuances.

(d) Agencies may begin to determine an applicant's suitability at any time during the hiring process. Because suitability issues may not arise until late in the application/appointment process, it is generally more practical and cost-effective to first ensure that the applicant is eligible for the position, deemed by OPM or a Delegated Examining Unit to be among the best qualified, and/or within reach of selection. However, in certain circumstances, such as filling law enforcement positions, an agency may choose to initiate

a preliminary suitability review at the time of application. Whether or not a person is likely to be eligible for selection, OPM must be informed in all cases where there is evidence of material, intentional false statements, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment, and OPM will take a suitability action where warranted.

(e) When an agency, exercising authority under this part by delegation from OPM, makes a suitability determination or changes a tentative favorable placement decision to an unfavorable decision, based on an OPM report of investigation or upon an investigation conducted pursuant to OPM-delegated authority, the agency must:

(1) Ensure that the records used in making the determination are accurate, relevant, timely, and complete to the extent reasonably necessary to ensure fairness to the person in any determination;

(2) Ensure that all applicable administrative procedural requirements provided by law, the regulations in this part, and OPM issuances as described in § 731.102(c) have been observed;

(3) Consider all available information in reaching its final decision on a suitability determination or suitability action, except information furnished by a non-corroborated confidential source, which may be used only for limited purposes, such as information used to develop a lead or in interrogatories to a subject, if the identity of the source is not compromised in any way; and

(4) Keep any record of the agency suitability determination or action as required by OPM issuances as described in § 731.102(c).

(f) OPM may revoke an agency's delegation to make suitability determinations and take suitability actions under this part if an agency fails to conform to this part or OPM issuances as described in § 731.102(c).

(g) OPM retains jurisdiction to make final determinations and take actions in all suitability cases where there is evidence that there has been a material, intentional false statement, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment. OPM also retains jurisdiction over all suitability cases involving a refusal to furnish testimony as required by § 5.4 of this chapter. Agencies

must refer these cases to OPM for suitability determinations and suitability actions under this authority. Although no prior approval is needed, notification to OPM is required if the agency wants to take, or has taken, action under its own authority (5 CFR part 315, 5 CFR part 359, or 5 CFR part 752) in cases involving material, intentional false statement in examination or appointment, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment; or refusal to furnish testimony as required by § 5.4 of this title. In addition, paragraph (a) of this section notwithstanding, OPM may, in its discretion, exercise its jurisdiction under this part in any case it deems necessary.

#### **§ 731.104 Appointments subject to investigation.**

(a) To establish a person's suitability for employment, appointments to covered positions identified in § 731.101 require the person to undergo an investigation by OPM or by an agency with delegated authority from OPM to conduct investigations. However, except as provided in paragraph (b)(2), an appointment will not be subject to investigation when the person being appointed has undergone a background investigation and the appointment involves:

(1) Appointment or conversion to an appointment in a covered position if the person has been serving continuously with the agency for at least 1 year in one or more covered positions subject to investigation;

(2) Transfer to a covered position, provided the person has been serving continuously for at least 1 year in a covered position subject to investigation;

(3) Transfer or appointment from an excepted service position that is not a covered position to a covered position, provided the person has been serving continuously for at least 1 year in a position where the person has been determined fit for appointment based on criteria equivalent to the factors provided at 5 CFR 731.202; or

(4) Appointment to a covered position from a position as an employee working as a Federal Government contract employee, provided the person has been serving continuously for at least 1 year